

ANTI-MMR VACCINE DOCTOR OUSTED

Dr Andrew Wakefield, the consultant gastroenterologist whose research has linked the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine to autism and bowel disease, announced on December 1 that he had been asked to resign because of his work.

He had been testing the theory that measles virus from MMR vaccine can colonise the bowel of susceptible children, producing inflammatory bowel disease which then, via a disruption of the chemical balance in the body and the brain, leads to autism.

Dr Wakefield's departure comes a month after he was made a Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists in recognition of his research work. Parents of autistic children involved in his research expressed their anger at the news. Some demanded reassurances that the Royal Free Hospital will continue treating their children.

Dr Wakefield told the *Telegraph* that he had seen almost 170 children with a similar story and claimed that the Department of Health's contention that MMR had been proven to be safe did not hold up.

Pressure on the children's gastroenterology unit is so great that its waiting list risks breaking the NHS's 18-month limit. (Source: *The Telegraph*, London, December 2, 2001, <http://news.telegraph.co.uk>)



VOLCANIC ACTIVITY FOUND BENEATH ARCTIC ICE CAP

Under the frozen surface of the Arctic Ocean, scientists aboard a US Coast Guard icebreaker have unexpectedly discovered a searing cauldron of activity, including underwater volcanic movement and deep-sea hot springs.

Scientists have mapped and studied the Gakkel Ridge, which runs for 1,100 miles from north of Greenland to Siberia beneath the Arctic ice cap. This is the deepest and most remote portion of the global mid-ocean ridge system, where new ocean crust continuously is created as sea floor

spreading unfolds through volcanic activity. Defying expectations, the Gakkel Ridge appears to be highly volcanically active. The mission also retrieved evidence of a vast field of undersea vents known as "black smokers".

Gakkel Ridge is considered the world's slowest-spreading mid-ocean ridge. Because the southern end of the ridge spreads somewhat more quickly than the northern end, the scientists had expected that volcanic activity would peter out as they headed north. Instead, they discovered irregular pockets of volcanic activity rather than a uniform pattern.

(Source: *Reuters*, Nov. 28, 2001)

DUTCH STUDY MAY PROVE EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

A team of Dutch research doctors has conducted a study of 344 heart attack survivors and found that more than one in 10 of them had experienced "emotions, visions or lucid thoughts" while they were considered "clinically dead"—meaning that they were unconscious with no signs of pulse, breathing or brain activity at the time. Some of them reported having "out-of-body" experiences.

The survey took two years to conduct and is the largest study to date on the phenomenon of near-death experience (NDE).

The study itself raises some important questions about the continuation of consciousness after death and whether the mind and the brain can function independently. It also suggests the possibility of a spiritual component of human beings outlasting their mortal existence, and hints at the Universe being meaningful and not just random.

No doubt the debate about how to interpret the results of the study will continue for some time to come.

(Source: *The Lancet*, via the website www.cosmiverse.com, December 12, 2001)

SOY ISOFLAVONES MAY PROMOTE BREAST CANCER

The increasingly consumed isoflavone, genistein—a plant oestrogen linked to the health benefits of soy, has been shown in a series of University of Illinois studies to stimulate the growth of oestrogen-dependent human breast cancer cells.

The findings of three studies, funded by



the National Institutes of Health, are detailed in the *Journal of Nutrition* (November 2001), *Carcinogenesis* (October 2001) and *Cancer Research* (July 2001).

The results demonstrate that genistein in various forms stimulates tumour growth. They also suggest that women with oestrogen-dependent breast cancer or a predisposition to it may want to reduce their consumption of soy products with a high isoflavone content.

Helferich in *Cancer Research*, compared soy protein isolates containing varying levels of isoflavones. The team found that oestrogen-dependent tumour growth increased as the isoflavone content increased in the soy-containing diet.

(Source: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Nov. 5, 2001, www.uiuc.edu/)

FDA IGNORES EVIDENCE OF DANGEROUS NEW CHEMICALS IN IRRADIATED FOOD

The US Food and Drug Administration has ignored growing evidence that a new class of chemicals formed when food is irradiated could be harmful, according to a recent report released by Public Citizen and the Center for Food Safety.

The groups are urging the FDA to refrain from legalising irradiation for any additional types of food until the new chemicals are tested for safety.

The chemicals, called cyclobutanones, do not occur naturally anywhere on Earth. They recently were found to cause genetic damage in rats and genetic and cellular damage in human and rat cells.

The groups' report, "Hidden Harm", details how the FDA has ignored this unique class of chemicals, which are created in many irradiated foods that the agency has legalised for sale in the USA—including beef, pork, chicken, lamb, eggs, mango and papaya. It is expected that cyclobutanones also would be formed in many other foods the FDA is currently considering to legalise for irradiation.

The organisations today also released the sworn affidavit of toxicologist William Au, who was retained by the groups to review independently the risks posed by cyclobutanones and other chemicals formed by irradiation that could cause genetic damage.

Au, an environmental toxicology professor at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, is internationally

recognised for his work on the toxicological mechanisms that induce human disease. For more than 20 years he has taught, published peer-reviewed research and served on expert committees. He has received numerous awards and has written or co-written more than 100 published articles. "Without conclusive evidence regarding the safety of these products, the safety of irradiated food cannot be assured," he warned.

Au urged the FDA to "seriously and explicitly" consider "repeated observations" of genetic damage and reproductive toxicity in feeding experiments.

Though cyclobutanones were first identified in irradiated food in 1971, it was not until 1998 that German government scientists discovered that some types of cyclobutane, 2-DCB, caused genetic and cellular damage in human and rat cells.

Despite these findings, the FDA not only has failed to acknowledge publicly the potential risks posed by cyclobutanones; the agency also proceeded to legalise irradiation for three classes of food, even after the first two German studies were made public.

Ironically, cyclobutanones are so easily detectable and have been known to remain in food for such lengthy periods (more than a decade) that they are commonly used as "markers" to determine if food has been exposed to ionising radiation.

(Source: Dr Joseph M. Mercola, December 15, 2001, www.mercola.com/2001/dec/15/irradiated_food.htm)

ULTRASOUND CAUSES SUBTLE BRAIN DAMAGE IN BABIES

Evidence suggesting that ultrasound scans on pregnant women cause brain damage in their unborn babies has been uncovered by scientists.

In the most comprehensive study yet on the effect of the scanning, doctors have found that males born to mothers who underwent scanning were more likely to show signs of subtle brain damage.

A team of Swedish scientists has confirmed earlier reports on the effects of ultrasound, with the most compelling evidence yet that unborn (male) babies are affected by the scanning. They compared almost 7,000 men, whose mothers underwent scanning in the 1970s, with 170,000 men whose mothers did not, looking for differences in the rates of left- and right-handedness.

The team found that men whose mothers had scans were significantly more likely to be left-handed than normal, pointing to a higher rate of brain damage while in the womb. Crucially, the biggest difference was found among those born after 1975, when doctors introduced a second scan later in pregnancy. Such men were 32 per cent more likely to be left-handed than those in the control group.

Normally, left-handedness is genetic: the likelihood of two left-handed parents having a left-handed child is 35 per cent, while for two right-handed parents it is only nine per cent. It is when the incidence of left-handedness begins to rise



"You will travel to a mysterious, far-off, exotically beautiful land and carpet-bomb it."

above these normal rates that scientists become concerned that brain damage of some kind could be a factor.

The growing evidence that ultrasound affects unborn babies may cast new light on the puzzling rise in left-handedness over recent years.

(Source: by Robert Matthews, *Telegraph*, Dec. 20, 2001, www.news.telegraph.co.uk)

EURO BANKNOTES TO HAVE RADIO-FREQUENCY ID TAGS

According to an *EE Times* story published in December, the European Central Bank is working with technology partners on a hush-hush project to embed radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags into the fibres of euro banknotes by 2005.

A spokesman for the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt, Germany, confirmed the existence of a project but was careful not to comment on its technologies.

Although euro banknotes already include such security features as holograms, foil strips, special threads, microprinting, special inks and watermarks, the ECB believes it must add further protection to keep the euro from becoming the currency of choice in the criminal underworld.

"The RFID allows money to carry its own history" by recording information about where it has been, said Paul Saffo, Director of the Institute for the Future in Menlo Park, California.

Banknotes present "an interesting future application for us," said Tom Pounds, Vice President of RFID Projects at Alien

Technology, which holds the rights to a fabrication process that suspends tiny semiconductor devices in a liquid that's deposited over a substrate containing holes of corresponding shape. The devices settle on the substrate and self-align.

Rather than working on the interconnection to an RF antenna one chip at a time, "we can do a massively parallel interconnection," Pounds said. Banknotes are not Alien's primary focus at present, he said.

(Source: *EE Times*, December 19, 2001, www.eetimes.com/story/OEG20011219S001)

LOSS OF SUPERTANKERS AT SEA BLAMED ON GIANT WAVES

Scientists blame the disappearance of more than 200 supertankers and container ships during the past 20 years on monster waves of up to 36 metres in height.

A team of oceanographers at the Technical University in Berlin re-created in a tank the gigantic "one-off" seas that are capable of breaking a 180-metre-long ship in half.

"Even in the tank the effect was awe-inspiring," said the research leader, Günther Clauss. "The exploding wave was so powerful that it broke through the ceiling of the building in which the tank is located."

Using a computerised, hydraulically powered wave-making machine, Professor Clauss's team established that the monster waves could occur with little or no warning. He said slow-moving waves were caught up by a succession of faster waves

travelling at more than twice their speed.

"What happens then is that the waves simply pile up on top of each other to create a monster. The result is an almost vertical wall of water which towers up to 36 metres in height before collapsing on itself. Any vessel caught by one of these has little chance of surviving."

(Source: *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 10, 2002, www.smh.com.au/news/0201/09/national/national18.html)

THERMAL DEVICE CAN DETECT LIES BY READING YOUR EYES

A new lie detector that measures sudden flashes of heat from around the eyes may soon be available.

"This is the first technology that allows lying to be measured or lying to be detected without any contact with the subject whatsoever, instantaneously, in real time," said lead researcher James Levine, an endocrinologist at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota.

"You don't need to hook them up to anything; you don't need any sophisticated experts to analyse the data."

"As people lie, there is a massive increase in blood flow around the eyes, and associated with that there is sudden warming around the eyes, where the colour changes to white in the thermal imaging system," Levine explained.

(Source: *UPI*, January 2, 2002)

UN PROPOSAL TO REGISTER EVERY PERSON ON EARTH

A scheme whereby every person in the world would be fingerprinted and registered under a universal identification scheme has been put to a United Nations round-table meeting by Pascal Smet, the head of Belgium's independent Asylum Review Board.

Mr Smet said the European Union was already considering a Europe-wide system, using either fingerprints or eye-scanning technology to identify citizens, and said that the plan could be extended worldwide.

"If you look to our societies, we are already registered from birth until death. Our governments know who we are and what we are. But one of the basic problems is the numbers of people in the world who are not registered, who do not have a set identity, and when these people move with real or fake passports you cannot identify them.

(Source: *AAP*, December 13, 2001)



A BAN ON WEAPONS IN SPACE?

The Space Preservation Act of 2001 (HR 2977), introduced as a Bill in the US House of Representatives on October 2, 2001 by Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), aims "To preserve the cooperative, peaceful uses of space for the benefit of all humankind by permanently prohibiting the basing of weapons in space by the United States, and to require the President to take action to adopt and implement a world treaty banning space-based weapons".

Note the following extracts from Section 7, Definitions: "(2)(A) The terms 'weapon' and 'weapons system' mean a device capable of any of the following: (i)(III) directing a source of energy (including molecular or atomic energy, subatomic particle beams, electromagnetic radiation, plasma, or extremely low frequency [ELF] or ultra low frequency [ULF] energy radiation) against [an] object; or (IV) any other unacknowledged or as yet undeveloped means. (IV)(ii) Inflicting death or injury on, or damaging or destroying, a person (or the biological life, bodily health, mental health or physical and economic well-being of a person)—(I) through the use of any of the means described in clause (i) or subparagraph (B); (II) through the use of land-based, sea-based or space-based systems using radiation, electromagnetic, psychotronic, sonic, laser or other energies directed at individual persons or targeted populations for the purpose of information war, mood management or mind control of such persons or populations; or (III) by expelling chemical or biological agents in the vicinity of a person.

(B) Such terms include exotic weapons systems such as (i) electronic, psychotronic or information weapons; (ii) chemtrails; (iii) high-altitude ultra low frequency weapons systems; (iv) plasma, electromagnetic, sonic or ultrasonic weapons; (v) laser weapons systems; (vi) strategic, theatre, tactical or extraterrestrial weapons; and (vii) chemical, biological, environmental, climate or tectonic weapons.

(C) The term 'exotic weapons systems' includes weapons designed to damage space, natural ecosystems (e.g., the ionosphere and upper atmosphere) or climate, and weather and tectonic systems with the purpose of inducing damage or destruction upon a target population or region on Earth or in space."

(Source: *Secrecy News*, January 10, 2002, www.fas.org)

AUSTRALIA'S DOMESTIC INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, ASIO, TO BE GIVEN UNPRECEDENTED POWERS

A further boost to Australia's political police agencies, including unprecedented powers to detain people secretly without charge, has become a major item in the Howard government's agenda for the new year.

At its last Cabinet meeting for 2001, on December 18, the government approved "a raft of measures" under the pretext of combatting terrorism. It also announced a summit of federal and state government leaders in March to strengthen and possibly restructure the police and intelligence forces.

The Cabinet confirmed a plan, first unveiled in the wake of the September 11 attacks in the United States, to allow the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) to detain and interrogate for 48 hours anyone whom it suspects of involvement in terrorism or of having any information about terrorism.

Detainees will be held incommunicado, unable to contact their families and denied access to legal advice or representation. ASIO will not have to specify a charge or produce evidence, yet any prisoner who refuses to answer its questions can be imprisoned for five years.

Working in conjunction with state and federal police, ASIO will be able to have people picked up, brought before a tribunal and ordered to provide information or hand over documents, even if they are not themselves suspected of terrorist activity. These provisions could easily be used against journalists and political activists.

According to Attorney-General Daryl Williams, "terrorism" will be re-defined so that it includes an act or omission "for a political, religious or ideological purpose designed to intimidate the public with regard to its security and intended to cause serious damage to persons, property or infrastructure". The criminal code will also cover aiding, abetting, conspiracy, attempt and incitement, with all these offences carrying a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

These provisions are so sweeping that they could cover a range of dissenting political activity, including protests and the distribution of literature. Moreover, collection, receipt or provision of funds for the preparation and planning of terrorism, or knowingly assisting any of these activities, will be punishable by a prison sentence of up to 25 years.

ASIO and other intelligence and police agencies will be given powers to access unread emails, allowing them to act on the basis of messages that the alleged recipient has not even seen. They will also be permitted to share information on terrorism and alleged financial links with equivalent agencies overseas. ASIO will receive extra funding and resources, unspecified as yet, and "Cabinet will give further consideration to a range of additional measures" in the new year.

Over the past two decades, ASIO has already been handed powers to tap phones, intercept email and mail, plant tracking devices on people or vehicles and install listening devices in offices and homes. It can easily obtain secret search-and-entry warrants, and physically or electronically break into computer files and databases.

This is not the first time that governments have seized upon the alleged threat of terrorism to expand ASIO's powers. The first ASIO Act was passed in 1979 in the wake of the 1978 attempted bombing of the Hilton Hotel in Sydney during a Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting. The federal Fraser government, joined by the Wran government in New South Wales, declared that "the age of terrorism" had arrived in Australia. That bombing remains unsolved to this day, but it led to two police frame-ups of members of the Ananda Marga religious sect. Sect members spent years in prison before the frame-ups were exposed, leaving all the evidence pointing to the bomb having been planted by ASIO itself, or another police agency.

In 1999, the Howard government cited fears of terrorism at the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games as a pretext for giving ASIO further sweeping powers. No terrorist activity eventuated, but ASIO's powers—including to hack into computers, access taxation files and plant secret tracking devices—have remained. The government also used the Games as a pretext to pass legislation providing for the military to be called out against domestic political unrest.

(Source: by Mike Head via *World Socialist Web Site*, WSWS.org, December 27, 2001, www.wsws.org/articles/2001/dec2001/asio-d27.shtml)